

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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USDEL MBFR VIENNA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
ALL NATO CAPITALS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 08349

EXDIS

GENEVA FOR SALT TWO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NPG, NATO, MNUC, PARM, MPOL, FR, GW, UK
SUBJECT: HLG MEETING, PROPOSED BILATERALS, AND THE NPG
MINISTERIAL -- TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

REF:(A) STATE 226620 (DTG: 071605Z SEP 78)
(B) USNATO 8193 (DTG: 072010Z SEP 78) NOTAL
SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE THAT TIMING REGARDING CIRCULATION
OF THE HLG PAPER, CONVENING OF THE NEXT HLG MEETING,
PROPOSED BILATERALS ON TNF ISSUES, AND THE UPCOMING NPG
MINISTERIAL NEED CAREFUL COORDINATION IF WE ARE TO AVOID
UNNECESSARILY AROUSING ALLIED SENSITIVITIES. WE PROVIDE
SOME THOUGHTS AND RATIONALE BELOW WHICH POINT TO THE
FOLLOWING:

. -- IT APPEARS ADVANTAGEOUS TO AIR INITIAL ALLIED
REACTIONS TO THE HLG PAPER PRIOR TO CONDUCTING BILATERALS
AND PRIOR TO THE NPG MINISTERIAL.

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. -- THE US SHOULD PROPOSE THAT THE OPPORTUNITY BE
GIVEN FOR ALL NPG ALLIES TO EXPRESS THEIR INITIAL
REACTIONS TO AN HLG PAPER PRIOR TO THE MINISTERIAL,
PREFERABLY DURING THE WEEK OF 2 OCTOBER AND IN A MEETING
OF HLG PRINCIPALS OR, ALTERNATIVELY, IN AN INSTRUCTED
PERMREPS' SESSION. IF SUCH AN EXCHANGE COULD BE

ARRANGED DURING THE WEEK OF 2 OCTOBER, THE PROPOSED BILATERALS DURING THE WEEK OF 9 OCTOBER COULD REMAIN ON TRACK, OR BE HELD LATER IN THE WEEK OF 2 OCTOBER AS ALLIES MAY DESIRE. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON VIEWS/GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE SOME CONSIDERATION NO DOUBT ALREADY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THIS POINT, IT HAS OCCURRED TO US THAT THE TIMING OF THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS SUGGESTED IN PARA 2 OF REF A AND OF ANY MEETING OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP (HLG) TO DISCUSS THE FORTHCOMING PAPER OUGHT TO BE CAREFULLY COORDINATED. FOR EXAMPLE, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF AN INITIAL HLG MEETING TO DISCUSS PRELIMINARY NATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE US PAPER COULD TAKE PLACE PRIOR TO THE PROPOSED BILATERALS. WE SEE ADVANTAGES TO THIS SEQUENCE:

. (A) WE COULD GO TO THE BILATERALS ARMED WITH KNOWLEDGE OF ALLIED REACTIONS TO THE CAREFULLY COORDINATED AND BALANCED TNF MODERNIZATION VIEWS THAT WE PRESUME WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE HLG PAPER;

. (B) BY HOLDING BILATERALS AFTER INITIAL HLG DISCUSSIONS, WE COULD FINE TUNE OUR APPROACH TO THE BILATERALS, THE BETTER TO PROJECT HOW SERIOUSLY WE ARE ADDRESSING ALL OF THE FACTORS INVOLVED, AND TO
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CONSIDER WHAT ASPECT OF ALLIED VIEWS TO GIVE GREATEST WEIGHT. FURTHER, WE WOULD HAVE INSIGHT INTO THE VIEWS OF THE SMALLER ALLIES BEFORE THE BILATERALS.

. THIS APPROACH WOULD NOT NECESSARILY FORECLOSE THE PROSPECT OF CONDUCTING SUCH BILATERALS DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9 OR EVEN IN THE LATTER PART OF THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 2, PROVIDING AN INITIAL HLG MEETING COULD TAKE PLACE PRIOR TO THEN, SAY EARLY IN THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 2. AT A MINIMUM, IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO HAVE THE HLG PAPER IN THE HANDS OF NPG ALLIES BEFORE THE BILATERALS (PERHAPS WITH A COPY TO FRANCE), TO ENABLE DISCUSSIONS TO BE MORE FOCUSED ON HARD REALITIES.

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2. THIS LEADS TO THE FURTHER TIMING CONSIDERATION VIS A VIS THE UPCOMING NPG MINISTERIAL. WE SHARE WASHINGTON'S SENSITIVITY TO AVOID "STEAM ROLLERING" THE ALLIES AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE GUIDANCE FOR CONVENING THE NEXT HLG MEETING "AS SOON AS PARTICIPANTS DESIRE". HOWEVER, WE NOTE THAT ANY DELAY IN AN HLG MEETING BEYOND THE OCTOBER 18-19 NPG MINISTERIAL MEANS THAT INITIAL REACTIONS TO ANY US PAPER WOULD BE AIRED FIRST IN THE

LIMITED-ATTENDANCE MINISTERIAL FORUM WHERE ALL HLG MEMBERS WILL NOT BE REPRESENTED.

3. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, CONSIDERING THE DIFFICULTY IN SCHEDULING HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON RELATIVELY SHORT NOTICE, THE EARLIEST AN HLG MEETING COULD BE SCHEDULED WOULD PROBABLY BE THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 2. FURTHERMORE, AN HLG MEETING PRIOR TO THE MINISTERIAL SCHEDULED MUCH LATER THAN THAT WEEK WOULD

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BE LESS-THAN-OPTIMUM FROM AN ALLIED VIEWPOINT BECAUSE IT WOULD BEGIN INFRINGING ON PRE-MINISTERIAL PREPARATIONS.

4. GIVEN THESE TIMING CONSIDERATIONS, WE FORESEE SOME DIFFICULTY AHEAD REGARDLESS OF THE APPROACH WE SELECT:

. (A) IF WE TAKE NO INITIATIVE IN SUGGESTING A DATE FOR A PREMINISTERIAL HLG MEETING, WE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DISPLEASE THOSE ALLIES WHO WILL NOT BE REPRESENTED AT THE MINISTERIAL. CANADA, PER REF B, HAS ALREADY PUT DOWN A MARKER IN THIS REGARD. FURTHERMORE, A LONGER DELAY IN AN HLG MEETING WOULD MEAN THAT THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING BILATERALS AFTER AN INITIAL AIRING OF ALLIED VIEWS (PER PARA 1 ABOVE) WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE FOREGONE, UNLESS THE BILATERALS WERE TO BE RESCHEDULED.

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. (B) ON THE OTHER HAND, IF WE SUGGEST A MEETING DURING, SAY, THE FIRST WEEK OF OCTOBER (ASSUMING THE HLG PAPER IS CIRCULATED VERY SHORTLY), THEN WE MIGHT RUN THE SECRET

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RISK OF BEING ACCUSED OF "STEAM-ROLLERING", UNLESS WE WERE CAREFULLY TO CAVEAT SUCH A PROPOSAL.

5. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE ADVANTAGE TO BE GAINED IF THE US WERE TO OFFER AT LEAST TO CONVENE AN HLG DURING MEETING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 2, WITH THE EXPRESSED PURPOSE OF AIRING WHAT WOULD ADMITTEDLY BE ONLY PRELIMINARY ALLIED REACTIONS. IN MAKING SUCH AN OFFER WE COULD, TO OUR ADVANTAGE, NOTE:

. (A) THAT WE RECOGNIZE THAT ALLIES COULD ONLY BE PREPARED TO EXPRESS THEIR GENERAL IMPRESSIONS AND REACTIONS GIVEN THEIR BRIEF (AT MOST ABOUT 2 WEEKS) CONSIDERATION OF THE PAPER, BUT

. (B) THAT WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO ALLOW FOR ALL HLG MEMBERS TO BE ABLE AT LEAST TO SHARE THEIR INITIAL REACTIONS PRIOR TO THE MINISTERIAL.

6. SHOULD HLG MEMBERS BE UNABLE TO FIND A MUTUALLY-AGREEABLE MEETING DATE IN EARLY OCTOBER:

(A) THE ABOVE APPROACH WOULD HAVE PUT US IN THE POSITION OF AT LEAST HAVING TRIED TO CALL A PRE-MINISTERIAL MEETING. THUS, WE COULD SOMEWHAT DEFUSE THE COMPLAINTS OF THOSE NOT REPRESENTED AT THE MINISTERIAL. WE COULD ALSO ENDEAVOR TO FOCUS ANY MINISTERIAL CONSIDERATION OF HLG MATTERS MORE TOWARD "MODALITIES" OF HLG ADDRESSAL OF THE US PAPER THAN TOWARD ITS SUBSTANCE, PERHAPS COMBINING THIS APPROACH WITH PROPOSING AN HLG MEETING ON 20 OCTOBER, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MINISTERIAL.

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. (B) ALTERNATIVELY, WE COULD SUGGEST AN EARLY OCTOBER INSTRUCTED PERMREPS SESSION FOR AIRING INITIAL NATIONAL VIEWS. WHILE SYG LUNS, RATHER THAN THE US, WOULD CHAIR SUCH A SESSION, WE BELIEVE THAT FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXCHANGING PRELIMINARY REACTIONS THIS MODE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON VIEWS/GUIDANCE. BENNETT

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